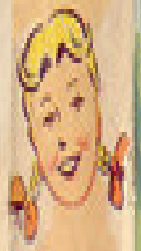


Four in a Family

Enid Blyton









LUTTERWORTH

Four in a Family



Enid Blyton

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FOUR IN A FAMILY

by

ENID BLYTON

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1. “MUMMY, WHERE ARE YOU?”

One day three children came home from school together. There was Roddy, who was eleven; Linda, who was nine, and Ian who was eight. They were brothers and sister, and they lived in a pretty little cottage called Whitewalls.

They had another little sister called Rosie, who was just five. She had had her birthday the week before, and she felt very grown-up now that she was five!

“Rosie isn’t at the gate to meet us,” said Linda, looking for the golden-haired Rosie, who was usually swinging on the gate when they came home from school.

“The front door’s shut!” said Roddy in surprise, as they came to the gate. “Mummy usually leaves it open for us!”

“We’ll go round the back way then,” said Ian, and they all went round to the kitchen door. But there was no one in the garden, and no one in the kitchen either, when they opened the door!

“Mummy! Where are you?” called Roddy. “Mummy, we’re home!”

Nobody answered. Rosie didn’t come running to meet them. The house was quite quiet and empty. Roddy was puzzled.

“Where can Mummy and Rosie be?” he wondered, and he called again. “Mummy! *Mummy!* Where are you?”

A voice answered—but it wasn’t Mummy’s voice. It came from the garden next door.

“Is that you back home, children? Come here a minute.”

“That’s Mrs. Fraser,” said Linda. “Perhaps she has a message for us. Come along.”

All three went to the wall that divided the two gardens. To their great surprise Rosie was sitting there, with Mrs. Fraser holding her—and Rosie was crying!

“Why, Rosie—what’s the matter?” said Roddy, putting his arms round his little sister.

“Where’s Mummy?” asked Linda, suddenly feeling scared. “Why, tea isn’t even laid for us! Where’s Mummy?”

“You come in and have tea with me, and I’ll tell you,” said Mrs. Fraser, lifting Rosie down. “Mummy’s all right, don’t worry—she’ll be back soon.”

“It’s our Daddy, it’s Daddy!” suddenly wailed Rosie. “Mummy’s gone to Daddy.”

“Please tell us what’s happened, Mrs. Fraser,” said Roddy, anxiously.

“Well, dear, a car went too near your Daddy as he cycled along, and he fell off and hurt his head,” said Mrs. Fraser. “And he was taken to hospital to have it seen to. Someone told your mother, and she brought Rosie here to me and went off to your Daddy. I’m to give you tea—and I’ve got currant buns with jam inside because I know you all like them.”

But nobody bothered about currant buns!

“Will Daddy come back with Mummy? When is Mummy coming home?” asked Linda.

“Soon, soon,” said Mrs. Fraser. “Now, don’t you worry, my dears! Everything will be all right. Sit here, Rosie, and you shall have the first bun.”

“I don’t feel like tea,” said Ian. “I want to go home and wait for Mummy.”

“No, dear—you must do as Mummy said,” said Mrs. Fraser. “That’s your best way of helping her. You sit down and have tea. I’ll bring Baby Ben up in his high chair. He’s had his tea, but he’ll like to watch you having yours.”

Baby Ben was delighted to have so many people to tea. He took a spoon and banged loudly on his tray, and smiled round, showing his new little teeth.

“Oh, he’s got two more teeth!” said Linda, who loved the baby. “Can he walk any better yet?”

“Yes—he can walk four steps now before he falls over, bump!” said Mrs. Fraser, passing round the buns, glad that Baby Ben was taking up Linda’s attention. She didn’t want Linda to cry as well as Rosie!

It wasn’t a very merry meal, and all the time Roddy was listening for his mother to open the front gate next door. It made a sharp little click, which he knew very well. He listened and listened!

“Is Mummy upset?” asked Ian. “Did she cry?”

“Oh, no—Mummies are brave,” said Mrs. Fraser. “She’ll want you all to be brave, too, and help her a lot.”

“I shall help,” said Rosie. “I shall do all the washing-up.”

“*You!*” said Linda. “Why, you’re only five. You’ll break everything!”

“I shall do all the shopping for Mummy,” said Ian. “Every bit.”

“I shall do all the washing-up,” said Rosie again, louder than before. “I shall turn on the taps and . . .”

“You can’t reach them,” said Linda. “You know you can’t.”

“I shall turn on the taps,” said Rosie, again, beginning to shout.

“Sh!” said Roddy, leaping out of his chair. “I heard our gate click. Look—it’s Mummy! *Mummy!* We’re here!”

Mummy waved to him but went straight on indoors. “I’m going to her,” said Roddy. “Thank you for the nice tea, Mrs. Fraser.” And he sped out of the door and along the front path to the gate.

Linda and Ian followed at once, with Rosie stumbling behind. “Wait for me, wait for me!” she called. But nobody waited. They so badly wanted to find Mummy and ask her what had happened!

And then at last they were in their own house, hugging Mummy. “Tell us everything,” said Roddy. “Quick, Mummy, tell us everything!”

2. POOR OLD DADDY!

“Don’t look so worried,” said Mummy, taking Rosie on her knee. “I’m sorry I wasn’t back when you came home from school, but Mrs. Fraser said she would give you a nice tea. Now—about Daddy.”

“Is he badly hurt?” asked Roddy, anxiously.

“No. Not *very* badly,” said Mummy. “But he fell with his head on the kerb, so he’ll have to rest quietly in hospital for a while. Poor old Daddy.”

“Can’t we go and see him?” asked Linda.

“Dear me, yes—and you can take him little presents,” said Mummy. “You can buy him flowers—he’ll love those—and his favourite sweets—and a magazine or two.”

“Oh *yes*!” said Linda, pleased.

“And we’ll help you all we can,” said Ian. “So that you won’t feel *too* lonely without Daddy!”

“Shall I do the washing-up?” asked Rosie, pulling at Mummy’s arm. “I’d like to do the washing-up.”

“We’ll see,” said Mummy. “Daddy said he was *sure* you would all help me.”

“Have you had any tea, Mummy?” asked Linda. “You haven’t! Well, I’ll put the kettle on straightaway. Roddy, you get the tin of biscuits for Mummy.”

“I’ll cut some bread-and-butter,” said Rosie and ran to the larder.

“Rosie! You know you can’t cut bread-and-butter!” called Linda. “Can she, Mummy?”

“She can get my slippers,” said Mummy. “I don’t want any bread-and-butter. Roddy, you put some coal on the fire for me. Dear me, how nice it is to come home to a family like mine!”

“When will Daddy be home?” asked Roddy, as he put coal on the fire.

“I don’t know. Not for a week or two,” said Mummy. “But we’ll see him as often as we can. Oh thank you, Rosie, for taking off my shoes.”

“She’s putting your slippers on the wrong feet,” said Linda. “Let *me* do it, Rosie.”

“No. It’s *my* job. I want to,” said Rosie, changing over the slippers. “Mummy, shall I wash up after you’ve had your tea?”

“You and your washing-up!” said Mummy. “I believe you just want to be allowed to turn on the taps!”

She stood up and went to hang up her coat and get her pretty overall. “I must wash out Daddy’s pyjamas and take them clean to the hospital to-morrow,” she said. “You make me a cup of tea when the kettle boils, Linda, and bring it to me. Dear me—it will seem strange not to have Daddy coming home to-night!”

When Mummy had washed out the pyjamas, and put several things ready in a bag to take to the hospital the next morning, she went in to see Mrs. Fraser.

The children were left alone in the little sitting-room.

“I shall buy Daddy a big bunch of violets,” said Linda. “He loves those. I shall take them to him when I visit him.”

“And I shall buy his favourite magazine,” said Roddy. “All about aeroplanes.”

“I shall buy him a new bicycle if his is broken,” said Rosie.

“Don’t be silly,” said Linda. “You haven’t nearly enough money.”

“Well, I’ve got more than you,” said Rosie, looking quite fierce.

“You haven’t!” said Linda. “You spend all your pennies instead of saving any!”

“All the same—Rosie’s right,” said Roddy, and he took down the four little money-boxes from the mantelpiece. Rosie’s was in the shape of a pig, with a slit in his back. Linda’s was a little house and you posted pennies down a

chimney. The two boys had money-boxes exactly like the red pillar-boxes in the road.

Roddy dumped them all down on the table—and only one made a jingling sound, and that was Rosie's pig!

"Oh!" said Linda, suddenly remembering. "Of course—it was Rosie's birthday last week, and we spent *all* our money on presents!"

"Yes," said Rosie, beaming. "A little tiny car—and a box of chocolates—and a book. I like them all."

But the other three were staring at one another in dismay. No money in their boxes—not even a penny! Then how were they going to buy even a tiny present to take to Daddy?

"What *are* we going to do?" said Ian, at last. "Rosie's the only one with any money—and there's only one penny and one ha'penny in her box. So NOBODY can buy Daddy a present!"

"Mummy will give us some pennies to buy presents," said Rosie. But the others frowned at her at once.

"They wouldn't be presents from *us* if Mummy paid for them!" said Linda. "No—we've got to get some ourselves. But how can we, Roddy?"

"We'll make plans," said Roddy. "Good plans. Now—has anyone an idea to earn money? *I've* got one already!"

3. EXCITING PLANS

“What’s your plan, Roddy?” asked Ian.

“Well,” said Roddy, importantly, “I heard Mr. Fraser say the other day that he would give a shilling to anyone who would clean his bicycle properly, it was so very muddy, and he hadn’t got the time. So *I* shall go and offer to do it for him.”

“That’s a very good idea,” said Linda. “But fancy—you never would clean *Daddy’s* bicycle for him when he asked you to. I suppose it’s because you’ll get a shilling from Mr. Fraser—and Mummy said you ought to do Daddy’s for love.”

Roddy went red. “Well,” he said, “cleaning Mr. Fraser’s bicycle is *worth* a shilling, because it’s so very dirty. And anyway I’ll be sure to clean Daddy’s for him, *and* mend it for him, too, while he’s away.”

“I don’t know what *I* can do,” said Ian, frowning. “Do you suppose I could weed somebody’s garden?”

“I shouldn’t *think* so,” said Roddy. “Look how badly you weeded Mummy’s flower-bed the other day—why, she had to weed it all over again after you!”

“I was in rather a hurry, that’s all,” said Ian.

“Well, you’d better not be in a hurry if you offer to weed somebody’s garden to earn some money!” said Linda. “And anyway, it’s not a very good idea, Ian. You can’t very well go round and ask people for a job. They might not like it.”

“Well—what are *you* going to do to earn some money for Daddy?” asked Ian. “I bet you can’t think of anything.”

“I can then—I’ve already thought of a very very good one!” said Linda. “But I shan’t tell you what it is!”

“Oh, Lindy, do tell us,” begged Rosie. “Lindy, what’s your very good idea! Whisper it in my ear. Then I’ll tell you *my* good idea.”

“I know yours, thank you,” said Linda. “It’s going round doing people’s washing-up!”

“Oh, how did you guess!” said Rosie. “Lindy, do do tell me your good idea.”

“Yes, go on, Linda,” said Roddy.

“Well,” said Linda, “you know my old doll’s pram?”

“Yes,” said the others.

“Well, I shall empty my dolls out of it and the pillows and mattress and blanket and rug,” said Linda. “And I shall go and fetch people’s shopping for them. Old Mrs. Lane has a bad leg and she hates going all the way down the hill and up again, with a heavy basket. I can take *everything* in my doll’s pram.”

“Yes. That *is* rather a good idea!” and Ian. “I wouldn’t mind doing that myself—I could take my barrow.”

“No, you couldn’t,” said Rosie. “It’s *my* barrow now. You gave it to me when the wheel broke, don’t you remember? And it isn’t mended yet.”

“Oh, yes, so I did,” said Ian. “Well, it’s too small, anyway—it wouldn’t do for shopping.”

“How much will you charge for fetching people’s shopping?” said Roddy to Linda.

“Well, Miss Jenks once gave me threepence for fetching some potatoes for her,” said Linda. “I shall charge threepence, I think.”

“We’ll have to explain to people that we’re doing it for Daddy,” said Roddy. “I mean—Mrs. Fraser was so kind to us to-day that really and truly I ought to clean Mr. Fraser’s bicycle for nothing.”

“Yes. You ought,” said Linda. “But never mind—we can always find some way of doing things for love, as well as for earning money. Rosie, do you want to help too, or not? You’re really too little. And *don’t* be silly enough to talk about washing-up again.”

“All right. But I shan’t tell you my other idea,” said Rosie. “I simply shan’t.”

“You haven’t got one,” said Ian. “You’re just a baby, Rosie.”

“I am not. I’m five,” said Rosie. “And I love Daddy as much as you do, and I’m GOING to earn some money, so there!”

“Let’s not tell Mummy about our plans,” said Roddy. “She might want to *give* us some money to buy things for Daddy. Let’s make it all a surprise for her!”

“Right,” said Ian. “Rosie, you hear? It’s a secret—and you know you have to keep secrets.”

“A secret,” said Rosie, nodding her head. “I never tell secrets.”

“Oooh, you *do*!” said Ian. “Who told Daddy where I had hidden the pipe I gave him for his last birthday? You did!”

“Sh! Here’s Mummy,” said Linda. “Mummy, shall I go and feed the hens for you?”

“What are you all looking so serious about?” asked Mummy. “Not worrying about Daddy, I hope! I expect he’s having a very nice rest at this very moment.”

“We’ve been talking about a secret,” said Rosie. “A lovely secret. It’s . . .”

“ROSIE!” said the other three at once, and she stopped.

“I wasn’t going to *tell* your secret!” she said. “I was only just going to say what we . . .”

“ROSIE!” said everyone again, and this time Rosie really did hold her tongue.

“A secret!” said Mummy. “Well, don’t tell me, or you’ll spoil it. Now—not another word, Rosie—*what* a chatterbox you are!”

4. IT’S POURING WITH RAIN!

The next day was a half-holiday. The three elder children were pleased, because it meant that they could set to work to earn some money in the afternoon. They rushed home at top speed from morning school.

“As soon as we’ve had our dinner we’ll set to work,” said Linda. “Rosie, if you DARE to tell what we’re going to do I won’t ever let you play with my best doll again.”

“I won’t tell,” said Rosie. “I won’t tell you what *I’m* going to do, either. *I’ve* got a secret too.”

“I expect it’s a silly one,” said Ian. “Like when you hid your bar of chocolate in the oven and wouldn’t tell us where it was—and it melted away!”

“You *keep* remembering that,” said Rosie. “Just when I forget it, you keep remembering it! It makes me sad to think of that melted chocolate—and Mummy was cross because her oven was in a mess.”

“Cheer up—there’s plenty more chocolate in the world!” said Roddy. “There’s Mummy calling—yes, Mummy, what do you want?”

“Has Lindy set the table for dinner?” called Mummy. “And have you washed your hands, you boys?”

“Oh dear, no!” said Lindy, Roddy and Ian, and Lindy flew to fetch the table-cloth and the boys rushed to wash their hands. Rosie set the five chairs round the table.

After dinner everyone helped to clear away. Lindy washed up and the boys dried. Rosie kept dabbling her hands in the washing-up water, pretending she was helping, and Linda was cross.

“Splashing me all down my front!” she said. “Rosie, go away—go away and think about your secret. I expect you’ve forgotten it by now.”

“No, I haven’t forgotten,” said Rosie, looking solemn. “I’m going to mend my secret now.”

She rushed off into the garden. The boys laughed. “*Mend* her secret!” said Roddy. “Whatever does she mean? You *keep* secrets, you don’t mend them!”

At last the washing and drying were finished. Mummy came into the kitchen with her hat and coat on, and some books. “I’m just going to visit Daddy,” she said. “I’m buying him some flowers on the way from all of us—and taking him these books to read.”

“Can’t we come too?” asked Lindy, at once.

“Not to-day,” said Mummy. “No one can see him except me for a few days.”

“We want to buy him flowers and things ourselves,” said Roddy. “Can’t we?”

“Oh yes!” said Mummy. “You can all take him a present when you see him. But I’ll just take flowers from everyone to-day, out of my own money. Shall I give him your love?”

The children sent a lot of messages to their Daddy, and then Mummy set off to catch the bus.

“Now we can get on with our plans for earning money,” said Linda. “I’ll get my dolls’ pram ready to take out.”

“I’ll just finish reading my book,” said Roddy. “Then I’ll go and ask Mrs. Fraser if I can clean her husband’s bicycle.”

“I’ll wait for you,” said Ian. “I’d just like to mend the signal belonging to my clockwork train.”

“Where’s Rosie?” asked Linda.

“Don’t you remember—she’s gone to mend her secret!” said Ian, getting out his signal.

Linda went to fetch her dolls’ pram. She brought it into the sitting-room and began to take out all the things in it—mattress—cushions—blanket—rug.

“How dirty they are!” she said. “I’ll have to wash them. I think I’ll do them now, and hang them up to dry while I’m away doing errands.”

So there they were, all three of them, happily reading, playing and washing. Then Ian stood up, his signal mended. “I’m going,” he said.

“Whose garden are you going to weed?” asked Linda.

“Oh—I’ll call at Mrs. Dawson’s, just down the road,” said Ian. “Her garden is *very* weedy!”

“It’s pouring with rain!” said Roddy, quite startled to see the rain-drops pelting against the window. “Goodness—you can’t go out weeding in *this*, Ian!”

“Bother it!” said Ian, crossly. “No, I can’t! It’s impossible to pull up weeds in the rain—they’re too muddy. Why didn’t I go before?”

“Aha! *You* won’t earn any money to-day!” said Roddy, getting up. “Well—I’m off to ask Mrs. Fraser about her husband’s bicycle. I can easily clean it inside the shed.”

He went out—but dear me, in three minutes he was back. Linda and Ian looked at him in surprise.

“No good!” said Roddy, frowning. “Mr. Fraser asked the boy across the road to do it—and he’s in the middle of it now—for one-and-sixpence too! WHY didn’t I go immediately after dinner and get the job?”

“You didn’t go because you wanted to finish your book!” said Linda. “*You* won’t earn any money to-day. Well—I’m going to see if I can do anyone’s shopping. Where’s my umbrella?”

“You left it at school!” said Ian. “So *you* won’t be able to earn any money to-day!” And then Rosie appeared.

“I can’t mend my secret!” she wailed. “Won’t any of you help me to mend my secret?”

5. ROSIE KEEPS HER SECRET

Rosie stood in the doorway, looking rather dirty and very wet. “I want you to mend my secret!” she wailed again.

“What *does* she mean?” said Linda. “Rosie, you’re soaking wet. Surely you haven’t been standing out in the rain?”

“Yes, I have,” said Rosie. “I’ve been trying to do some mending, to help my secret.”

“Goodness me—this is a very peculiar secret of yours!” said Roddy. “What is it you want mending?”

“I’ll *pay* for it mending!” said Rosie. “I’ll pay the penny and the ha’penny I’ve got in my money-pig. Because if I don’t get my secret mended, I can’t earn any money.”

“I’ll mend it, then,” said Ian, getting up. “If you want to give away your penny ha’penny *I* don’t mind having it—it will go towards something for Daddy!”

He went out into the rain with Rosie. The others watched through the window. Rosie took Ian to a corner of the garden, and pointed.

“Why—it’s that old barrow Ian gave Rosie,” said Linda. “She wants Ian to put the wheel on for her. Whatever for?”

“Perhaps she’s got the same idea as you, Linda—she’s going to wheel people’s shopping up and down the hill!” said Roddy. “And I wouldn’t be surprised if she does it in the pouring rain!”

“She’s *not* to take my idea!” said Linda, fiercely. “Silly little thing—standing out there in the rain trying to mend that old barrow.”

“Well—she was doing something which would help her to earn some money,” said Roddy. “And *we* weren’t. Oh good—Ian has taken the barrow into the shed out of the rain.”

They heard the sound of hammering. It was Ian trying to put on the wheel for Rosie. It was not at all easy, and the

wheel would not stay in its right place. In the end Mr. Fraser heard the noise and looked over the wall to see what it was all about.

"It's my barrow," explained Rosie. "You see I want it for my secret—it's a secret for earning money, Mr. Fraser—but I can't begin till the wheel is on again."

"Oh," said Mr. Fraser, with his jolly laugh. "Well—you won't get it on *that* way, Ian. I'll hop over and do it for you, Rosie."

And in a trice he was over the wall and in the shed. He took a big nail and a hammer, and soon his strong hands had mended the barrow. The wheel was in its right place, and the barrow could be wheeled along.

"Oh *thank* you!" said Rosie, and she ran indoors and came out with her money-pig. She emptied out the penny and ha'penny, and held it out to Mr. Fraser.

"I said I'd give Ian this if he put the wheel on," she said. "But he didn't. You did—so here's the money to pay you."

"Well, if you don't mind, I've too many pennies in my pocket," said Mr. Fraser, "and they're very heavy. I'd rather you kept yours. But do tell me what you are going to do with your barrow, Rosie—or is it a secret?"

"I'll tell *you*, because you've been kind to me," said Rosie. "Ian, you go away, so that you can't hear."

"No," said Ian, rather sulky because he hadn't been able to mend the barrow. "You can tell me too."

"Well, I shan't," said Rosie. "Can you bend down, Mr. Fraser? I'll whisper in your ear."

So, to Ian's annoyance, Rosie whispered and whispered into Mr. Fraser's big red ear. He nodded and smiled, and then whispered back so loudly that Ian could quite well hear.

"A very fine idea!" whispered Mr. Fraser. "You'd better do it for Mrs. Fraser first of all, Rosie."

"Oh really? Then I'll come now," said Rosie, and went off with Mr. Fraser, proudly wheeling the little barrow.

Ian stared after them, wondering what Rosie's secret was. Goodness—she never kept *their* secrets—but she was certainly keeping her own! He went back to the others and told them what had happened. They all felt rather gloomy.

"The ground's too wet for me to go out weeding, even though the rain has stopped," said Ian.

"And the shops will be closing now," said Linda, "so it's no good my going out to ask if I can fetch shopping."

"And someone else has cleaned Mr. Fraser's bike," said Roddy. "We've not been very lucky."

"We put our jobs off too long," said Linda. "Anyway, Rosie won't be able to earn any money either. I expect her secret is just a silly one."

But what a surprise they had when Rosie came back an hour later with her barrow, beaming all over her round face.

"Where's my money-pig?" she said. "I've got sixpence—look! I earned it all myself with my secret."

"*How* did you earn all that?" asked Lindy, astonished. "I guess someone just gave it to you—you didn't *work* for it!"

"I did, I did!" said Rosie. "I've got a secret work—and I'm going to earn a lot to-morrow, when you're all at school. But you said secrets must be kept, so I shan't tell you mine! Where's my money-pig? I've got sixpence, sixpence, sixpence for him. Won't he be pleased?"

6. LINDA GETS A JOB

When Mummy came home from seeing Daddy, she was very pleased because she had good news for the children.

"Daddy's getting on *very* well," she said. "And he's longing to see you—but the doctor won't let him see anyone but me for a few days."

"Oh—then we shall be able to get a lot of . . ." began Rosie, pleased, and stopped when the others glared at her.

"You *nearly* gave our secret away," said Linda. "Mummy, when *can* we see Daddy?"

"Next week," said Mummy. "Now—what about some tea? Ah, I see you have the kettle boiling, Linda. Who's going to lay the tea?"

"I am!" said Rosie. But the others were quite determined that Rosie was going to do nothing of the sort. Why—she was the baby of the family—and she had actually gone out and earned sixpence in some strange way with Ian's old barrow—it would never do to let her do jobs like laying the table, or washing-up or putting coal on the fire!

So, to Mummy's amusement, Roddy pushed Rosie on to her mother's knee, and then all three rushed to lay the tea. Rosie pointed her finger at them.

"They're hurrying in case I do it all!" she said. "Mummy, I was the only one who earned some . . ."

"ROSIE!" roared the other three, angrily, and Rosie stopped with a smile. She quite enjoyed herself, sitting on her mother's knee while the others did the work.

Linda crept in to talk to the boys that evening when they were in bed. Rosie was fast asleep in her cot in Linda's room.

"Roddy! Ian!" said Linda. "We've *got* to earn some money to-morrow, or Rosie will get her money-pig full before we've even *begun* to put anything aside. But how can we—because we're at school all day?"

“You get up early and go and see Mrs. Lunt,” said Roddy. “She does her shopping on Friday. Ask her if you can wheel it up the hill for her after school. You can fetch it on the way home.”

“Yes, I will,” said Linda. “What are *you* going to do, Roddy?”

“I’m going to call at the newspaper shop and see if I can deliver the evening papers for Mr. Dan,” said Roddy. “Are you going gardening, Ian?”

“Yes, if it isn’t raining,” said Ian. “Isn’t it *hard* to earn money!”

“Rosie seems to find it easy,” said Linda. “I wonder what she does with that old barrow.”

They went off to school the next day, Linda wheeling her pram, much to Mummy’s surprise—especially as it was quite empty—no doll, no mattress, no pillow, no rug! Linda called at Mrs. Lunt’s on the way, and the old lady was pleased to see her.

“Mrs. Lunt, our Daddy is in hospital and I want to earn some money to buy him flowers,” said Linda. “Is there any work I can do for *you*? Shopping, for instance?”

“Well, there now—I always go down and do my shopping on a Friday,” said Mrs. Lunt. “Would you like to fetch my parcels from the shops on your way back from school? That steep hill is hard on my poor old legs, if I have to carry a heavy basket.”

“Oh yes. I hoped you’d say I could,” said Linda, pleased. “I’ll bring all the shopping up in my doll’s pram—and if you hear of anyone else who wants things fetched or delivered, just let me know, Mrs. Lunt.”

“I will,” said the old lady. “Now look—here is the list of shops to call at for my shopping to-day.” She gave Linda a sheet of paper and the little girl tucked it into her pocket and nodded.

“Right!” she said. “I’ll bring everything back safely,” and off she went. She put her empty pram into the bicycle shed

at school and went in to her lessons.

When afternoon school was over she hurried out to get her pram and set off to the village before the shops closed. Ah—she had plenty of time—good!

She called at the baker's for bread. She went to the fishmonger's for herrings. She fetched a bag of apples, four pounds of potatoes and a cabbage from the greengrocer's. And last of all she called at the ironmonger's and he gave her a big saucepan he had mended for Mrs. Lunt.

"Dear me—how heavy my pram is now!" said Linda, as she pushed it up the hill. How she puffed and panted! And how pleased old Mrs. Lunt was when she arrived with all her goods! She looked through them and nodded.

"Yes—you've got everything. Splendid, Linda. Here is sixpence for you."

"Oh, I only want threepence for this," said Linda. "That's all people usually give, Mrs. Lunt."

"Well, I'm giving you sixpence because you had to fetch such a *lot* of things," said Mrs. Lunt. "And here's an apple for you too—and will you please go to Miss Tapping's to-morrow, *and* Mr. Long's, because they both have jobs waiting for you. I told them about you."

"Oh *thank* you!" said Linda, delighted, and wheeled away her empty pram. Sixpence—and more jobs to-morrow. What a good thing it was Saturday, and there was no school! Aha! What would Roddy and Ian and Rosie say when she told them what a lot of jobs she had? Linda really felt very happy as she went in at her garden gate. Now—where were the others?

7. VERY BUSY PEOPLE

“Hallo, darling!” Mummy said to Linda, as she came in, looking hot. “You’re a bit late. Tea’s ready, so come along. Roddy and Ian have had theirs—and so has Rosie.”

“Oh dear!” thought Linda. “I wonder if she’s earned *another* sixpence! I wish Roddy and Ian would come home. I do want to tell someone about *my* sixpence. Goodness—that pram was heavy!”

Roddy came home beaming, and beckoned to Linda. She went out into the garden to him. He showed her ninepence.

“I couldn’t deliver papers,” he said, “because Jack Hodge does that. But Mr. Dan asked me to weigh out packets of tobacco for him, because he’s hurt his hand—so I weighed out fifty packets of one ounce each.”

“Good gracious!” said Linda. “*Fifty* packets—what a lot!”

“He promised he’d give me sixpence—but then he said I’d done the packets so carefully, my work was worth ninepence,” said Roddy, proudly. “Look—sixpence and three pennies.”

“Jolly good!” said Linda. “I got sixpence—and some more jobs promised for to-morrow.”

“So have I!” said Roddy. “I’m to pile up a lot of rubbish in Mr. Dan’s yard and burn it—have a bonfire. Fancy being *paid* sixpence to make a bonfire! I’d make a hundred for nothing if I didn’t want to save up for Daddy’s present!”

“Here’s Ian,” said Linda, as her other brother came running in, waving. “*He* looks jolly pleased with himself!”

He was. “I’ve got eightpence!” he said, jingling his pockets. “Mrs. Dawson paid me tuppence a time for weeding those round beds in her front garden. Goodness—I must have pulled up *hundreds* of weeds—but the beds do look nice now!”

“You ought to start on *our* beds then,” said Linda. “They’ll get very weedy with Daddy away.”

“Well, perhaps I will,” said Ian. “I rather like weeding—it’s nice to see the beds getting so neat and tidy when I weed. Mrs. Dawson said her sister wanted some gardening done too—so I’m going to *her* to-morrow. How did you two get on?”

They told him, and he listened with much interest. “We haven’t done badly,” he said. “I wonder how Rosie is getting on?”

“Mummy says she has hardly seen her all day,” said Linda.

“To-morrow will be a very busy day for us,” said Roddy, feeling important. “I shall be off soon after breakfast to help Mr. Dan.”

“Well—you ought to see if there’s anything you can do for Mummy first,” said Linda. “I mean—she’s not got Daddy now to do odd jobs. You ought to bring in more coal, Roddy, and we ought to help with the shopping and things like that.”

“Yes. You’re right,” said Ian. “Well, we’ll do everything Mummy wants, then we’ll go out to work!”

That made them laugh. “Look—here comes Rosie,” said Linda, as she heard the sound of the squeaky barrow being wheeled along the road.

Rosie appeared at the front gate, looking very hot indeed, and rather tired—but not too tired to give them a very wide smile.

“Hallo,” she said.

“Where have you been?” asked Linda.

“Lots of places,” said Rosie. “Secret places.”

“Oh, don’t be *silly*!” said Ian. “You’ve kept your secret long enough.”

“You said I couldn’t keep a secret, so I *am* keeping one,” said Rosie. “I like my own secret. It’s nice.”

“Whatever have you been doing with my old barrow?” asked Ian. “You can’t be earning money with that! It’s not

strong enough to carry anything heavy."

"It's a good barrow. It earns me a lot of money," said Rosie, and she patted the barrow with her hand. Then she held out a purse she had tied with string round her neck. "Look—it's full of money!"

Linda opened it to see—and how she stared. It *was* full of money. Pennies. Two sixpences—good gracious, a whole shilling!

"*Rosie!*" she said. "How did you get all this? Whatever are you doing to earn so much?"

Rosie laughed. "You said I was too little to do anything," she said. "But my *barrow* isn't too little. I must put it away. It's tired. It's worked very hard to-day."

She went to put away the barrow, walking slowly because her legs were very tired. The three stared at once another, astonished and puzzled.

"What *can* she be doing?" said Roddy. "I looked in the barrow, but there's only tiny bits and pieces there, as there always are. She's earned more than *we* have!"

So she had—and though she was bursting to tell them what she was doing, Rosie still kept her secret. She was so tired that she fell asleep eating her supper. Funny little Rosie—she certainly *did* know how to keep a secret!

8. ON SATURDAY MORNING

Saturday was a very busy day indeed for the four children. First of all they went to ask Mummy what jobs they could do for her.

"Well, that's nice of you," said Mummy. "Linda, I'd be so glad if you'd take this shopping list for me and bring back the Saturday shopping. I do want to go and see Daddy this afternoon, and it would be such a help if you'd do the shopping."

"I'd love to!" said Linda. "I'll go at once, Mummy, if you'll give me the list."

"You're a good girl," said Mummy. "I shall give you sixpence to spend if you do it well."

"I'd rather do it for love, thank you, Mummy," said Linda.

"But I thought you wanted some money to buy a present for Daddy," said Mummy.

"I do," said Linda. "But that would be *your* money, Mummy—and anyway I don't *want* to charge you anything just now, when you're worried about Daddy."

Mummy gave her a hug. "You're a nice little daughter!" she said. "Well, here's the list, dear—see what you can do!"

"What can *I* do for you?" asked Roddy. "Do you want any scrubbing done? I'm a very good scrubber, Mummy. I scrubbed out our bicycle shed at school once, with two other boys, when Lady Twickton came to give away our prizes. We had to get EVERYTHING spotless, you know."

"Dear me—then I wonder if you could scrub out the scullery for me, Roddy," said Mummy. "I'll show you how—you . . ."

"Mummy, I know *exactly* how to do it," said Roddy. "I want a pail of hot water, soap, scrubbing-brush—and your kneeling mat. And what's more I'll sweep out the yard too—

and if you like, I'll burn all the rubbish on the heap at the bottom of the garden!"

"Well, really, Roddy—how grown-up you sound!" said Mummy. "I must pay you well for all this."

"Oh no, you won't!" said Roddy. "We'll all turn to and help you now Daddy's away and can't give you a hand. Ian, what are *you* going to do?"

"I'll weed the front garden and cut the grass," said Ian. "I know Daddy was going to do that to-day—but I can *easily* do it!"

"You *are* good!" said Mummy, gratefully. "I suppose Rosie wants to join in too?"

"Yes!" called Rosie from the scullery. "I'm beginning now. I'm washing up!"

"*Washing up!*" cried Linda. "Oh, you naughty girl—you'll break everything! And anyway, you can't turn on the taps!"

"I have, I have!" shouted back Rosie. "I stood on the potato box, so there! I reached them easily. Listen!"

There came a splashing noise as she turned on a tap again and the water flowed into the sink. Mummy laughed and went quickly into the scullery.

"Well, you *shall* help me with the washing-up," she said. "But you will be very very careful, won't you?"

Rosie was delighted. At *last* she was to be allowed to do the washing-up. Nobody knew why she had so longed to do it, but she always had. She felt very old indeed as she and Mummy washed up the breakfast things together.

"I suppose *you* don't want to be paid, either," said Mummy. "You are all very good and generous to me to-day. I really thought you might like some money to spend on Daddy."

"Well, you see," began Rosie, washing a plate round and round and round, "well, you see, we're all doing some . . ."

"ROSIE!" shouted Ian, who was listening. "Be quiet!"

"Oh, I keep forgetting," said Rosie. "We've all got secrets, Mummy. You see, we want to . . ."

“ROSIE!” said Ian, coming into the scullery, really afraid that the little chatterbox was going to tell Mummy everything.

“It’s all right, Ian,” said Mummy, laughing. “I’ll stop Rosie if she forgets and tells your secrets. Don’t worry.”

“You don’t know *my* secret!” said Rosie to Ian. “Nobody knows mine. Mummy, can I turn on the hot tap again?—the water’s getting cold. Am I washing up well?”

“Very well,” said Mummy. “But you needn’t really wipe a plate more than three times, Rosie. Hallo, Roddy—are you going to scrub the scullery floor now?”

“No, I’ll wait till you two have finished in here,” said Roddy. “I’ll just go and light the bonfire—and sweep out the yard—and then I’ll come back and do this floor.”

He went out whistling. Mummy felt very proud of him, and so did Rosie. They could see the smoke rising from the bonfire in a minute or two—and then they saw him sweeping the yard thoroughly, the dust and dirt and rubbish flying in front of the brush.

Ian was busy in the front garden. R-r-r-r-r, went the little lawn-mower as he cut the grass. After that he meant to pull up every weed in the beds—yes, every single one, just as he had pulled up Mrs. Dawson’s weeds. He had always thought that weeding was boring—but it wasn’t. No wonder flowers and vegetables grew for Mother.

Linda had already gone down to the village. Mummy had given her a big basket, but Linda had hung it up again. No—her pram was the best thing to bring back shopping in!

“I’ll just show Mummy what a good shopper I am!” she said, as she went down the hill. “She really will have a surprise!”

9. SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Linda went to shop after shop with her list, and soon her pram was piled high with things. Then up the hill she went again, pushing hard. She passed old Mr. Long's house and he waved to her.

"I'm just shopping for Mummy!" called Linda. "I'll do yours next, Mr. Long."

The morning was gone before the children guessed how the time was flying! Mummy was delighted with Linda's shopping—she hadn't forgotten a single thing.

"And just *see* how well Roddy has scrubbed my scullery floor!" she said. "It's spotless—and so is the yard. And every bit of rubbish has been burnt up on Daddy's rubbish heap; Roddy made a wonderful bonfire!"

"And hasn't Ian done the grass well?" said Linda, surprised to see the front garden looking so smart. "And he's almost finished weeding the beds, Mummy. He looks awfully hot."

"Yes. You've all been working at top speed," said Mummy. "You'll have to take the afternoon off and rest while I go and see Daddy!"

Linda didn't say anything to that. She knew quite well that their afternoon would be even busier than the morning! They meant to earn a lot of money then!

"What's Rosie been doing?" she asked. "I expect she would wash up all morning if you'd let her!"

"She's been cleaning all the shoes since you left," said Mummy. "I put her very oldest overall on—and you should have seen her—sitting on the floor with tins of brown and black boot polish, rubbing and polishing for all she was worth. She's only little but she's behaving as if she's very big—really, I'm proud of you all!"

Everyone was glad when dinnertime came. *How* hungry they were! “Nothing like a good morning’s work to make you hungry,” said Roddy. “More ham, please, Mummy—and two more potatoes—and another tomato!”

“Do the potatoes taste nice?” asked Rosie. “I scrubbed them for Mummy.”

“They taste beautiful,” said Roddy, solemnly. “Yes—this one really does taste of your scrubbing!”

After dinner Mummy washed up with Linda because she said it was Linda’s turn. Then she put on a pretty frock and went to catch the bus to see Daddy.

“Have a nice rest!” she called as she went out of the gate. “You’ve all worked *so* hard this morning!”

Roddy waved, laughing. He turned to the others. “Anyone want a rest? *I* don’t! I’m off to do Mr. Dan’s bonfire. Expect me when you see me!”

“And I’m off to Mr. Long’s and Miss Tapping’s,” said Linda. “I’ll be up and down our hill several times this afternoon, I expect!”

“And I shall be weeding at Mrs. Dawson’s sister’s place,” said Ian. “Rosie—what will *you* be doing?”

“Oh, I’m going to go and . . .” began Rosie, and then stopped with a mischievous smile. “No. It’s a secret—and you said I couldn’t keep a secret. So I’m going to keep *this* one.”

“You *can’t* keep secrets!” said Ian. “You’re too little, I suppose.”

“You said I was too little to do work and earn some money,” said Rosie. “But I’m not!”

She ran off into the yard and fetched out the little old barrow. She went out of the front gate with it, and turned to wave to the three puzzled children standing at the door.

“What *does* she do?” said Ian. “I’d follow her and see, if I hadn’t to be at my job by half-past two.”

“She’s not a bad little thing,” said Roddy. “We do tease her a lot, you know—just because she’s the baby. But she’s

not really a baby any more—goodness me, think what she earned yesterday!”

“Good-bye,” said Linda, wheeling her empty pram down the path. The boys soon followed, and Whitewalls Cottage was silent and empty, except for old Puss Cat snoozing on the kitchen windowsill.

Linda went to old Mr. Long’s first. He had his list ready. He read it over to Linda, and then gave her a little purse of money. “That should pay for everything,” he said.

“Oh—are you going to trust me to pay, too?” said Linda. “Mummy doesn’t usually give me so much money.”

“You’ll manage all right!” said old Mr. Long. “Do what that baby sister of yours does—tie the purse safely round your neck!”

“Oh—has Rosie been doing a job for you?” said Linda, hoping he would tell her what it was.

“Oh yes—for me and plenty of people,” said Mr. Long. “But I hear that it’s a kind of secret—so you wouldn’t expect me to give it away, would you?”

“No,” said Linda, more puzzled than ever about Rosie’s secret. “Well, I’ll go now, Mr. Long. I’ll be as quick as I can.”

She went off to Miss Tapping’s to get her shopping list too. It wasn’t such a long one as Mr. Long’s, and Miss Tapping didn’t give her any money to pay for the goods. She said the shops would put them all down on her bill.

“There’s one thing I don’t want you to forget,” she said. “And that’s this box of chocolates on the list. That’s very important. And will you choose nice ones, please?”

“Yes, Miss Tapping, I will,” said Linda. “Good-bye. I’ll bring everything back quickly.”

Off she went down the hill—goodness, her pram would be fuller than ever when she came back. But it was nice to do jobs like this. Linda felt really *very* important.

10. RODDY’S WORK AND IAN’S

Roddy soon arrived at Mr. Dan’s. “Ah—here you are—one minute before time, too. That’s what I like!” said Dan. “I hope you’re ready for some really hard work.”

“Oh yes,” said Roddy. “I’m very strong. I’ve already had a bonfire in our own garden this morning—and scrubbed our scullery floor—and swept out our yard.”

“And what did you get paid for that?” asked Mr. Dan.

“Nothing, sir,” said Roddy. “I did it for my mother. She’s worried because my father’s in hospital.”

“Ah!” said Mr. Dan. “Well, now—can you turn out those cupboards for me first—and we’ll put all the rubbish out in the yard. My hand is still bad, so I can’t carry anything—you’ll have to do all that.”

“I can easily carry everything,” said Roddy, glad that his arms were so strong. He and Mr. Dan began to clear out the cupboards—my goodness, what a lot of rubbish was in them! Roddy carried it all out into the yard, piled it up cleverly, and soon had a fine bonfire going.

“Splendid!” said Mr. Dan. “Now—do you think you could scrub out those cupboards for me while the bonfire is burning so well? You can keep popping out to put bits and pieces on the fire to keep it going.”

The cupboards had rather a lot of shelves, and Roddy got very hot scrubbing them all out—and hotter still when he went to stand by the bonfire and fed it to keep it going well. But he enjoyed it very much, and was very pleased when Mr. Dan said it was teatime and he wanted Roddy to share his tea.

“I say—is this the kind of tea you always have?” said Roddy, amazed at the things on the little table. “Gracious—tomato sandwiches—chocolate cake—ginger biscuits—and what’s this—*ice-cream*!’

“Well, I thought we deserved a good tea,” said Mr. Dan. “You’ve still got a lot of work to do, you know, because I’m going to ask you to climb up my ladder and get down some cardboard boxes for me. I want to sort out what is in them. So eat as much as you can—then you’ll feel fit to do some climbing!”

Roddy enjoyed his tea. He wondered how the others were getting on. Really, doing jobs was grand fun—and who would have thought there would be such a splendid tea!

Ian was getting on well, too. He found that Mrs. Brown, who was Mrs. Dawson’s sister, was very glad indeed of his help. When he had finished weeding the two beds he was asked to do, Mrs. Brown asked him if he was good at watering.

“Oh yes!” said Ian, who was always ready to play about with water. “But it rained in the night—your garden is nice and wet, Mrs. Brown.”

“Ah, but I was thinking of my greenhouses, Ian,” said Mrs. Brown. “It’s Saturday and my gardener is not here this afternoon. I usually have to water all the things in my greenhouse at the week-end—but you work so well that I really thought I could trust you to do that. The watering-can is rather heavy for me, but you look quite strong.”

“Oh, I *am*,” said Ian. “I’m the only boy in our class who can lift a form with one hand.”

So, to his delight, he was taken into the big greenhouses and shown what to water. Tomato plants still laden with red tomatoes—cucumbers—flowers of all kinds in pots. It was really quite exciting.

Ian liked the smell of the greenhouses. He liked dipping his can into the tank of lukewarm water at one end of the greenhouses, and sprinkling the plants as he had been told.

But it took a long time, because there were three greenhouses, and Ian felt that he must not miss out a single plant.

“You’re longing for water!” he said to the tomatoes. “Well, here you are—have a drink! I won’t miss any of you out, I know what it’s like to be thirsty!”

Mrs. Brown sent out a tea-tray to him as he worked. He was most surprised. “Is this for *me*?” he asked the maid who brought it out. “*All* for me?”

“Yes. All for you,” said the girl, smiling at the hot, red-faced boy, who was working so hard. “Sit down and eat every bit.”

It was almost as good a tea as Roddy was having at Mr. Dan’s—egg-sandwiches, a piece of jam sponge, and three chocolate biscuits—and lemonade with a piece of ice in it. Ian took it out into the garden and sat on the grass to eat it. He thought he had never enjoyed a tea so much in his life.

A little robin came up to him and perched on his foot. It was the gardener’s robin, and very tame. Ian was delighted, for he had never had a bird so near to him before. He threw the robin a crumb and it ate it at once, and then gave a little burst of song.

“You’re singing ‘thank you!’ ” said Ian. “Do you know, Robin, having to do gardening jobs to earn money for Daddy is making me feel I want to do a lot *more* gardening! I shouldn’t be surprised if I always garden with Daddy now. Catch—here’s another crumb! My word, this tea is a lovely surprise!”

Linda too had had a nice surprise while she did her shopping. She had to fetch butter and eggs from the dairy for Mr. Long—and when the girl read the list, she put a big ice-cream in front of Linda, because Mr. Long had written on the list—“Please give Linda a big ice-cream when she gets to your shop.” Wasn’t that nice of him?

Four tired children went home that night round about six o’clock—but how bright their faces were! They each had good news—there was no doubt about that!

11. SURPRISES FOR MUMMY

Linda arrived home first, pushing her empty pram—well, not quite empty, because there was one parcel still there. “Anyone at home?” she called. But nobody answered. Mummy wasn’t back yet, nor were the others.

“I’m tired!” said Linda to herself. “But I’m happy. Oh—here are Roddy and Ian, smiling all over their faces—that’s good!”

The boys came rushing in, and were disappointed to find their mother was not at home yet. “Rosie’s not here either,” said Linda. “I hope she’s all right. I’ve simply no idea where she’s gone!”

“Here’s Mummy!” said Ian, and ran to meet her. “Mummy—how’s Daddy?”

“Much, much better!” said Mummy, smiling round. “He can come home next Saturday—and you can all go and see him on Monday evening.”

“Oh *good*!” said Roddy. “That means we can buy him presents on Monday after school and take them to him that evening!”

“But I thought you hadn’t any money?” said Mummy, surprised.

“We’ve got *heaps*!” said Roddy, proudly, and began to jingle the money in his pockets. “Ah—we have a few secrets, Mummy! We spent all our money on Rosie’s birthday last week so we’d none left for Daddy. And we made up our minds to *earn* some.”

“And we’ve done a lot of different jobs!” said Ian, jingling his money too. “We’ve just come back from them. Why, look—here’s Rosie, looking *very* important, wheeling that old barrow as usual.”

“Rosie—Daddy’s getting better—and we can see him on Monday!” shouted Roddy.

“Oh good!” shouted back Rosie. “I shall buy him a new bicycle bell, because his got broken when he fell off. I’ve got plenty of money!”

She came in and beamed at them all. She looked very hot and very dirty, but extremely happy. Mummy took her on her knee.

“And is your secret still a secret?” she asked.

“Not now,” said Rosie. “Nobody’s got a secret now. We can tell everything, can’t we, Linda?”

Linda nodded. “Let’s take it in turn to tell Mummy what we’ve done,” she said. “You start, Roddy, you’re the eldest.”

“We’ve each got stories to tell!” said Roddy. “Well, Mummy, we all got jobs. I went down to Mr. Dan’s and because he had hurt his hand I weighed out packets of tobacco for him to sell. And to-day I went again and goodness me, he gave me a *wonderful* tea in the middle of my making a bonfire and scrubbing out cupboards!”

“Was the tea your payment?” asked Linda.

“Oh no—look—he gave me sixpence for the bonfire, sixpence for getting rubbish down from his top cupboards, and a whole shilling for scrubbing out the cupboards!” said Roddy, putting all the money out on the table. “And I got ninepence yesterday, so I’ve got two shillings and ninepence to spend on Daddy.”

“You’re a good boy, Roddy,” said Mummy, in a very happy voice. “It’s wonderful to think you did all that on your own just because you wanted to buy Daddy a present out of your own money!”

“I look rather dirty,” said Roddy, “but I did some rather dirty jobs, Mummy. Don’t you think that’s a lot of money to earn?”

“*I’ve* got some money too,” said Ian, and put out some on the table. “Look—that eightpence was for weeding Mrs. Dawson’s beds yesterday—and all this was for working at her sister’s, Mrs. Brown’s, to-day.”

“Good gracious!” said Mummy, startled. “At Mrs. Brown’s —that great big place—why, whatever did you do *there*, Ian?”

“I weeded—and I watered all the plants in three greenhouses,” said Ian. “All of them—tomatoes and everything. And Mrs. Brown sent me out a tea all to myself—and a robin sat on my foot to eat it with me!”

“Well done, Ian!” said Mummy, proudly, as she saw all the money he had laid out on the table. “Eightpence for yesterday—and . . .”

“And sixpence for the weeding to-day—and sixpence for each of the three greenhouses I watered,” said Ian. “That’s two shillings and eightpence altogether—a penny less than Roddy. I can buy a lovely present for Daddy!”

“Now let me tell *my* story!” said Linda. “I’ve been shopping with my empty pram, Mummy—look, I got this sixpence yesterday for delivering Mrs. Lunt’s shopping to her. And to-day I went to old Mr. Long’s and to Miss Tapping’s, and I went down to the village with my pram, and their lists . . .”

“But Linda—how clever of you!” said Mummy, astonished. “Did they really trust you?”

“Oh yes!” said Linda. “Mummy, Mr. Long even trusted me with a purse full of money. He said that it would pay for everything, but when I came back there was a shilling left in it—and he said it was for me!”

“Gracious!” said Ian. “A shilling just for fetching shopping.”

“*And* the dairy-girl gave me an ice-cream because Mr. Long had written it on his list!” said Linda. “And then, Mummy, I fetched all Miss Tapping’s shopping too—and she gave me threepence for each parcel, and there were five—so that was one and three—and here’s Mr. Lunt’s shilling—and my sixpence I got yesterday . . .”

“Two and nine!” said Roddy. “The same as I got. You *are* clever, Linda. Now—what about you, Rosie? Have *you* got a

story to tell?”

“Oh *yes*!” said Rosie, beaming, and emptied her purse on to the table. “Look—*I’ve* got the most money of all!”

12. ROSIE’S SECRET

On the table lay four shillings, five sixpences, and twelve pennies!

“Rosie! Why—you’ve got seven and sixpence altogether!” said Roddy, amazed. “But Rosie—*how* did you get it, with Ian’s old barrow?”

“It was a very good secret,” said Rosie, her eyes shining. “I thought of it myself and I whispered it into Mr. Fraser’s ear, after he’d mended the barrow, do you remember, Ian? And he helped me.”

“But what did you *do*?” said Ian, impatiently.

“Well, I took my barrow to the woods,” said Rosie. “And I took some string too, out of Mummy’s string-box . . .”

“So *that’s* where my string went!” said Mummy.

“And I went to where the woodmen have been cutting down trees,” said Rosie. “They saw up the big trunks and the branches, but they leave all the little twigs. I saw them there in the spring—little dry twigs that crack.”

“But whatever did you want with those?” said Linda.

“Well, Mrs. Fraser told me they are very good when she wants to start her fire in the morning,” said Rosie. “And I remembered what she said. So I thought I’d collect hundreds and millions, and tie them into bundles of twelve, and sell them for a penny each.”

“Well, well, well!” said Mummy, most astonished. “But how did you know where to sell them?”

“Well, when I told Mr. Fraser my secret idea, he told Mrs. Fraser, and she told her friends,” said Rosie. “And Mrs. Fraser and the baby came with me to the woods each time, Mummy—and Mrs. Fraser tied the knots on the bundles for me because I don’t know how to.”

“She was kind,” said Mummy. “Very kind.”

“And then I came to a place where there were some funny dry things under the trees,” said Rosie. “Mrs. Fraser said the pine-trees grew them to keep their seeds in—and then dropped them on the ground when the seeds had flown away on the wind.”

“Pine-cones!” said Roddy.

“Yes. Pine-cones,” said Rosie. “They burn very well on a fire, specially when it’s just lighted. Mrs. Fraser said she would pay me a penny for twenty—that was good, wasn’t it?”

“Very good,” said Mummy. “But could you count up to twenty?”

“Not at first,” said Rosie, “but I can now—listen!” And she counted quickly right up to twenty.

“Very good *indeed*!” said Mummy, more and more astonished. “And did you sell many twenties?”

“Oh yes!” said Rosie. “And I sold lots and lots of firewood bundles—the little twigs, you know. I picked out the biggest and best. The old barrow carried twenty cones and four bundles of wood each time—it’s a very *useful* barrow!”

“And who bought everything?” asked Linda, with great interest.

“Oh, all Mrs. Fraser’s friends—and Mummy’s too,” said Rosie. “And Mrs. Fraser bought two lots of cones—two twenties—I forget how many that is . . .”

“Forty,” said Roddy and Ian together.

“Yes, forty,” said Rosie, nodding her head. “And she bought six bundles of firewood too. And oh Mummy—I nearly forgot!”

“What?” asked Mummy.

“I got forty pine-cones for *you* and six bundles of wood,” said Rosie, beaming. “Will they be useful?”

“Very *very* useful,” said Mummy, hugging her. “Rosie—you are very surprising! How did you keep your secret so long?”

“Well, the others said I couldn’t keep a secret,” said Rosie. “But I can. And they said I was too little to earn money. But I’m big.”

“You’ve earned more than *we* have!” said Roddy. “You’re wonderful, Rosie! And you’re only our baby sister.”

“She’s not a baby any more,” said Mummy. “She’s a proper little girl, who can keep a secret and work and be trusted! I’m proud of you, Rosie!”

“I’ll get the barrow and tip the cones and the twigs into the wood cupboard,” said Rosie, wriggling off her mother’s knee. “Linda, what’s that parcel in your pram? Is it one you forgot to take?”

“No. It’s the one that Miss Tapping said I was to bring here, for all of us,” said Linda. “I quite forgot to take it out of the pram. I’ll get it.”

What do you think it was? A really nice box of chocolates! “And I chose them!” said Linda, laughing. “But I didn’t know they were for *us*. Oh Mummy—won’t Daddy like them!”

“Yes—but I think we’ll each have one straightaway!” said Mummy. “You earned them for all of us, Linda—how lovely!”

Rosie came in wheeling the little barrow, piled with cones and neatly-tied bundles of twigs. The others stared at it—how well Rosie had kept her secret! What a very very good idea!

“Mummy—I *shall* have enough to buy Daddy a new bicycle bell, shan’t I?” she said. “Did I get enough money?”

“Oh *yes*!” said Mummy. “You can buy him the best in the shop—and won’t he be pleased, Rosie! He’ll be delighted with *all* our presents—and what a lot of stories we shall have to tell him!”

13. A PROPER LITTLE FAMILY

After school on Monday afternoon Mummy met Roddy and Rosie, Linda and Ian. Her hand-bag was very heavy because in it she had all the money the four children had earned—what a lot there was!

They went off to the shops. “Here is your money, Roddy,” said Mummy. “Two shillings and ninepence—and yours, Ian, two shillings and eightpence . . .”

“And mine’s two shillings and ninepence,” said Linda. “Rosie’s got more than twice as much as we have—you will be able to buy the nicest present of all, Rosie.”

“I’m going to buy Daddy a bell,” said Rosie, for about the twentieth time. “A very loud one—the loudest in the shop. I shall ring every single one to see which is the loudest!”

“I’m going to buy him a two shilling magazine about aeroplanes,” said Roddy. “The magazine he likes best. And the other ninepence will buy him peppermints. He likes those.”

“I’m buying him nothing but bunches and bunches of violets,” said Linda. “They’re sixpence each for little bunches and ninepence for big ones. I shall buy him four sixpenny ones and one ninepenny. Won’t that be a lot, Mummy?”

“Good gracious yes!” said Mummy. “What are you buying him with your two and eightpence, Ian?”

“Some tobacco at Mr. Dan’s!” said Ian. “Perhaps one of the packets that Roddy weighed. Daddy can smoke it in his pipe, can’t he, Mummy?”

“Yes. He’ll be very pleased,” said Mummy. “And we’ve got that box of chocolates for him too, so he *will* be delighted!”

They spent all their money in the different shops—and Rosie kept them waiting while she rang every single bell in

the bicycle shop. The loudest one of all made such a noise that Mummy put her hands over her ears.

"This is the one!" said Rosie, pleased. "It's so loud that even cars will get out of Daddy's way when he rings it—and he won't be knocked off his bicycle again! How much is it?"

"I'm afraid it's expensive—it's seven shillings and sixpence," said the shopman.

"Oh, *that's* all right!" said Rosie, delighted. "That's just what I've got!" And she took her purse from Mummy and counted it all out on the counter.

Then off they went on the bus to the hospital. They went in at the entrance and then down a long long passage and came to a great big room where people were in bed. A smiling nurse beckoned them over to one bed—and there was Daddy, his head still bandaged, but looking very well indeed!

How pleased he was to see them! He hugged and kissed them, and said Rosie had grown, and oh, what *wonderful* violets!

"Yes. They're my present for you," said Linda, proudly. "Smell, Daddy!"

Then Roddy presented his aeroplane magazine and Daddy opened it at once. "*Just* what I've been longing for!" he said. "How *did* you guess, Roddy?"

"And here's *my* present," said Ian, and gave him the tobacco. Daddy put it against his nose and sniffed at it. "My favourite tobacco!" he said. "You *are* kind, Ian—but what's *this*, Rosie?"

"A bicycle bell—I'll ring it," said Rosie—and before anyone could stop her, she rang it loudly—r-r-r-r-ring! Everyone jumped and a nurse came hurrying over.

"Please, please!" she said. "You'll wake up anyone who is asleep."

"Oh, I forgot," said Rosie, looking round. But everyone smiled at her, so it didn't seem as if she had wakened anyone. Daddy laughed.

“Just like our Rosie!” he said. “But darling—this is a very very expensive bell—surely you didn’t buy it all yourself?”

“I did,” said Rosie, proudly. “I did! Didn’t I, Roddy?”

“Yes. Daddy, she was awfully clever and hard-working,” said Roddy, proud of his little sister. “It was all the money she earned.”

“Daddy—the children *all* earned the money they spent on you,” said Mummy. “Every one of them. They worked hard, so hard. I couldn’t *think* what they were up to. Tell your stories to Daddy, children.”

So Daddy had to hear the stories too, and he lay there listening, hardly able to believe his ears. “What a wonderful family I’ve got!” he said. “A *proper* little family, that sticks together when trouble comes. I’m so proud of you all that I can hardly speak!”

He took Mummy’s hand and squeezed it, and she kissed him. “*I’m* proud of them too,” she said. “Hurry up and come home to your proper little family, Daddy!”

The smiling nurse came up. “I’m afraid you must all go now,” she said. “Say good-bye!”

So they all said good-bye and went softly out of the big room, in case anyone was asleep, waving from the doorway and smiling. Dear old Daddy!

“I feel like cleaning Daddy’s bicycle twenty times over!” said Roddy. “I’m so glad he’s better.”

“And I feel like—like—warming his slippers even though he’s not at home,” said Linda.

“And I feel like weeding the garden from top to bottom,” said Ian. “Rosie—what do *you* feel like?”

“Can I do whatever I feel like, Mummy?” asked Rosie, at once. “It’s something *useful*.”

“Yes—you can do it,” said Mummy. “What is it?”

“I want to do the washing-up!” said Rosie, delighted. “And ALL BY MYSELF TOO!”

Then home they all went, chattering and laughing. Yes, Daddy was right—they really are a Proper Little Family!

[The end of *Four in a Family* by Enid Blyton]